

Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, encouraged college students and young adults to get involved in the health care debate and learn about all of the benefits available to them if the proposed legislation is approved. Slaughter said that young adults, including recent college graduates, often fail to buy health insurance because they cannot afford it. However, the legislation currently being considered in the U.S. House of Representatives would allow students to remain on the plan held by their parents through their 27th birthday.

“Between finding your first job, paying student loans, and building a life of your own, young adults have enough on their plates, without having to worry about losing their health insurance when they turn 18 or graduate from college,” said Slaughter. “I’m pleased we are able to include this provision in the bill.” According to the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, young adults are the most likely to be uninsured. Forty-seven percent of adults aged 18-34 were without health insurance at some point from 2007-2008. Young adults are also less likely to be offered health insurance through their job. Only 53% of adults aged 19-29 are covered by their employer, as opposed to 74% percent of adults aged 30-64. This forces many young adults to look to the individual insurance market, which is often prohibitively expensive.

A recent CBS News report also questions the notion that younger Americans are “invincible.” One in six young adults has a chronic condition, such as asthma, cancer, or diabetes. Twenty-five percent of young adults are obese. This past July, the Centers for Disease Control estimated that it cost \$147 billion in 2008 to treat obesity related illnesses. Additionally, one in six young adults is admitted into an emergency room because of injury.

To address these problems, the House health reform bill creates an insurance exchange for those not offered coverage through their employer. The exchange will allow you to comparison shop for the plan that’s right for you. Cognizant of the fact that young adults have less earning power, the plan offers subsidies to those unable to afford insurance on their own.

“Many young people are healthy and comfortable but forgoing health insurance is not a good idea,” said Slaughter. “During the course of the health care debate, we have focused on how reform will affect Medicare recipients, and I want young adults to know that there are a number of provisions in this bill that have a direct effect on their lives.”

Insurance companies will also be required to cover preventative care. Prevention and early detection will save money over the long run.

“One of the most important changes in this bill is preventative care,” said Slaughter. “We shouldn't just be making sick people better but focus on healthy people and how to keep them that way. It's so important for our country's future that we invest in prevention and wellness for young adults. If we can prevent chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, and ensure that society is healthier over the long run, it will benefit our businesses and economy. Workers will be more productive and take fewer sick days.”